

# *A ritual text for gay marriages*

“so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us,  
reuniting our original nature,  
making one of two, and healing the state of man”

—Plato, the fable of Aristophanes from the *Symposium*

## **Introduction**

There is currently no standard ritual text for gay marriages for the obvious reason that such marriages have been forbidden and, as a consequence, a public ceremony having the function of liturgy (rites and duties in religious worship) has not developed. In places where gay marriages have been permitted by state authorities the ceremonial language of the marriage either mimics marriages for the union of heterosexual couples, is provided by a helpful marriage celebrant, or is composed by the couple seeking to be married.

There are many examples of new texts for gay marriages.<sup>1</sup>

It is sometimes said that the advantage of religious rituals for marriage is that are grounded in traditions that span centuries. By contrast modern rituals for gay marriages, especially if they are composed by the celebrant or participants, do not normally refer to ancient texts. So, we are in the habit of thinking that there are no beautiful ancient texts that could form part of a rite for gay marriages. That is not true.

The core of this ritual text for gay marriages is a version of the fable of Aristophanes, which is recorded in Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>2</sup> It is the original text of the fable that tells the story of the origin of human desire and the meaning of love: we were once a different kind of being, cut in half by the gods, and therefore always destined to search for that lost part of ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: <<http://www.gayweddingvalues.com/sampleswedding.html>>

<sup>2</sup> "Aristophanes's Speech from Plato's Symposium." 2002. 10 Dec. 2015  
<<http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/sym.htm>>

The ritual may have any cultural characteristics the participants wish: they can choose any location, costume, music, specific vows, or ritual actions borrowed from their personal, religious history (such as the breaking of glasses). In particular, those parts of the Catholic religious ritual that refer to scripture have been removed.

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April 2006

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## Ritual text for gay marriage

### Introductory rites

*The persons to be married choose the method by which they are introduced to those invited to participate in the ceremony.*

**Celebrant says:**

**[Full name of person to be married]** and **[Full name of person to be married]**  
welcome you all to the celebration of their marriage.

### Celebrant's homily: the history of love

**Celebrant says:**

Our original nature was not like the present, but different. We know that the sexes were not two, but three—man, woman, and the union of the two—just as the sun, the earth and the moon are three.

In our original nature we were all bound at the back and sides, forming a circle, to the other half of ourselves.

Neither gods nor nature suffer our insolence to be unrestrained. And, so, they made a plan to humble our pride and improve our manners. To diminish our strength they cut

us in two, and gave us, each, a neck that could be turned to contemplate the part of ourselves that was lost. Through this we were to learn humility.

Separated from the other part of our true selves, these two parts of **[man/woman]**, each desiring **[his/her]** other half, come together, throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one. The desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, is the ancient and healing state of every person.

Each of us now separated from the other part of our true selves is but the indenture of a **[man/woman]**, and **[he/she]** is always looking for **[his/her]** other half.

We are prone to love and ready to return love, always embracing that which is akin to us. And when one of us meets with **[his/her]** other half, the actual half of **[himself/herself]**, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and would not be out of the other's sight even for a moment: these are the people who pass their whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire of one another.

Please face one another.

Do you **[name of person to be married]** take this **[man/woman]** to be your lawfully wedded **[husband/wife]**, promise to keep **[him/her]**, love and comfort **[him/her]**, in sickness and in health, whether you are rich or poor, and to be kind and faithful to **[him/her]** for the rest of your life?

**Person to be married says:**

I do.

**Celebrant says:**

Do you **[name of person to be married]** take this **[man/woman]** to be your lawfully wedded **[husband/wife]**, promise to keep **[him/her]**, love and comfort **[him/her]**, in sickness and in health, whether you are rich or poor, and to be kind and faithful to **[him/her]** for the rest of your life?

**Other person to be married says:**

I do.

**Celebrant says:**

Do you have rings?

**Person to be married says:**

[Name], I give you this ring, a symbol of my promises and love.

**Other person to be married says:**

[Name], I give you this ring, a symbol of my promises and love.

**Celebrant says:**

We praise Love, our greatest benefactor, which both leads us in this life back to our own nature, and gives us high hopes for the future, for Love promises that if we are worthy, it will restore us to our original state, and heal us and make us happy.

I pronounce you married. You may kiss.

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*Version: 14 December 2015*